



LIFELINK

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Fueling Your Body and Mind with Food

The foods we eat have a chemical effect on the brain and impact how we feel. Eating processed foods can keep your body from accessing the beneficial nutrients it needs to help you feel and perform your best. Why is this? Many of the essential and naturally occurring nutrients are stripped, altered or replaced during processing.

A balanced diet that is high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein promotes optimal health and better mood. These whole foods are made of vitamins and minerals that are broken down during digestion, making them available for the body to use as energy and for essential processes like cellular repair. When essential components are missing, we experience a decline in energy, alertness and mood.

Supplements vs. Whole Food

Supplements typically use artificial or synthetic vitamins and minerals, which may not offer the same benefits as whole foods. The human body is designed to recognize naturally occurring nutrients, so it isn't able to utilize the man-made vitamins and minerals as effectively. Many supplements isolate particular nutrients and leave out essentials that the body would otherwise use if the food was consumed in its natural form. For example, while whey protein (popular in protein shakes and supplements) produces a rapid increase in amino acids needed for muscle growth and repair, casein protein can also help prevent muscle breakdown. Where do both whey and casein naturally occur? In milk! In general, service members consume enough protein through their food and don't actually need to supplement their protein intake.

Comfort Food vs. Whole Food

Our mood often influences what we eat, but **what we eat can also influence our mood**. Take these scenarios for example:

- Two Sailors are experiencing similar stressors. They're in the midst of preparing for a permanent change of station (PCS) move that's causing a lot of strain in their households and on their wallets. At work, they're both hit with short-fused tasks that their current supervisors are keeping close watch on.
- When Sailor A gets home, tired and frustrated, he reaches

for cookies, potato chips and a soda and heads to the couch. He starts to get his mind off of everything, but about 20 minutes later he's back to feeling drained and irritated.

- When Sailor B gets home, tired and frustrated, he goes for some leftover grilled chicken and vegetables in the refrigerator, and a glass of water. His problems don't go away after he eats, but he's able to regroup and shift focus to the things he can get done at home to support the move without feeling angry or annoyed.

The comfort foods Sailor A went for are highly processed, high in added sugar and fat, and low in nutrients. The vitamins and nutrients he needed to rebalance his mood, such as serotonin, were missing or less effective because they were in a form that wasn't as accessible to his body. Because of that, his calm was short-lived, causing the craving cycle to begin again. Sailor B got the benefits of serotonin, boosting his mood and giving him the energy to be productive. Not only did he get his mind off of his day, but he'll sleep better and be more focused and alert.

How to Make Changes

Small changes can lead to big improvements. Instead of fast food, go for a rotisserie chicken at your local grocery store, a salad and fresh fruit. Shop the perimeter of your grocery store for fresh meats and produce. Most frozen food is good too; just skip those items with gravies, sauces and **hidden sugars**. Living in the barracks? Check out these **tips**. You can also talk to your Health Promotions Office or Registered Dietitians (RD/N) office for more information and resources.

Submitted by Lt. Pamela Gregory, OPNAV N17 Nutrition Program Manager and Registered Dietician.



Lifelink Spotlight

Counting Sheep to Boost Work Performance: New Sleep Study Begins Aboard USS Kidd

What can be done to make sure Sailors are getting enough sleep? Give them more.

Research teams from the Operations Research Department of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California are conducting sleep studies aboard deployed ships, including the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Kidd (DDG 100). Above simply looking at sleep patterns, the studies aim to better understand how Sailors operate.

“The base of the study is to improve Sailors’ performance by optimizing their watch standing schedules,” says Dr. Panagiotis Matsangas, one of the researchers conducting the study aboard USS Kidd and a retired commander in the Hellenic Navy. “In order to do that, it is important to understand the environment the Sailors live and work in,” she added in a related [Navy.mil](#) story.

Outside of optimizing watch standing schedules, an additional focus of the study is to identify and investigate conditions and obligations that affect Sailors’ workload. Researchers are comparing the difference between actual working hours of deployed Sailors compared to predictions based on the Navy Availability Factor model. Ultimately, the overall goal of the studies is to improve Sailors’ performance and quality of life while simultaneously reducing injury risk.

The studies have received significant support from senior Navy leaders. As Vice Adm. Thomas S. Rowden explained in a message to surface fleet: “Fatigue has measurable negative effects on readiness, effectiveness and safety.”

Learn about the sleep studies and take a self-tst to check your fatigue level by visiting <http://my.nps.edu/web/crewendurance>.

For tips to optimize your sleep, check out the NavyNavStress blog [here](#). The Navy Operational Stress Control website also has a downloadable fact sheet describing the benefits and design of alternative watch schedules, such as the 3/9 Watchbill.

Share how your crew is working to improve readiness. **Email us** or tag us on **Facebook** (@U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control).



Plan of the Week Notes

Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of July:

1. Taking steps to keep yourself safe during the 101 Critical Days of Summer isn't just about being careful around the grill or calling a cab when you've had too much to drink. It's about taking precautions during life's stressful moments and extended challenges. Sailors are encouraged to consider storing their personal firearm during highly stressful periods to reduce the risk of suicide. Commands are encouraged to work with Sailors to recognize those who need help and offer to store their weapons, per NAVADMIN 263/14. For more information about lethal means safety, visit www.meansmatter.org.
2. Living in the barracks doesn't have to mean lonely television dinners every night. To balance your plate without sacrificing taste, time or funds, go for frozen veggies (no sauces!), fresh fruit and quick protein options like tuna packets or chicken breast canned in water. For additional tips to eat healthy barracks-style and to learn about the benefits of sharing meal-time with others, visit <https://navstress.wordpress.com>.
3. When it comes to optimizing physical or psychological health, the benefits of drinking water are a "no-brainer." Just a two percent decrease in weight due to fluid loss has been shown to impair performance, including memory function. One size doesn't fit all when it comes to hydration. If you're 180 pounds and live an active lifestyle, you may need 151 ounces of water! Check out this hydration calculator to find out what you need at <https://www.guardyourhealth.com/hydration-calculator/>.
4. You are not alone. For a list of 24/7 resources to help you navigate life's challenges, visit <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/BeThereVeterans.aspx>. It's okay to speak up when you're down.

Free Gun Locks Available

A limited quantity of gun locks will be shipping to Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs) and Navy Operational Support Centers (NOSCs) starting in July. Gun locks have been proven effective in reducing suicides during at-risk periods. A few extra moments to retrieve and unlock a firearm can **interrupt the impulse for suicide** and open the door for help. Gun locks are available free of charge to Sailors and their families, made possible by Navy Suicide Prevention Branch in partnership with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

News and Resources

DoD/VA Suicide Prevention
Conference Registration
[DSPO](#)

How a \$20 Bar Tab can turn
into a Million Dollars-Worth of
Financial Stress
[NavyNavStress](#)

Shedding Light on Vitamin D
[Health.mil](#)

PTSD and Sleep Disruption:
Available Treatments
[HPRC Online](#)

Alternative Watch Schedule:
3/9 Rotation Info Sheet
[Operational Stress Control](#)

Hydration Calculator
[Guard Your Health](#)

Dealing with Depression:
Symptoms and Treatment
[Real Warriors Campaign](#)

Mindfulness in Military
Environments
[HPRC Online](#)

Supporting Your Shipmate's
PCS Move
[NavyNavStress](#)

Navy to Issue Letters of Intent
for Most Sailors' PCS Moves
[Navy.mil](#)

Team Navy Kicks off 2017
Warrior Games
[Navy.mil](#)

Trying to Stop Suicides as
Social Media Explodes
[SPRC](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

Independence Day
July 4

**101 Critical Days of
Summer**
(cont'd)

SPC Training Webinars
19 July, 1600
09 August, 1000
[Register here](#)

Fatigue: "The Big Grey Elephant in the Room"

As Sailors, sleep can seem like a luxury or low priority relative to mission demands. Surviving off of little to no sleep is often worn like a badge of honor. However, the amount of sleep the body needs doesn't vary by individual—seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep per night is ideal for all Sailors, according to **Naval Postgraduate School's Crew Endurance website**.

The 2011 DoD Health Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Personnel found that less than 50 percent of active duty service members get at least seven hours of sleep per night, increasing risk for a myriad of psychological health issues such as depression, anxiety and suicide risk.

A good night's sleep is so vital that even slight deprivation can negatively affect performance, memory, mood and judgment. It can also impact your perception of and response to stress. When you're sleepy, you may feel irritable, lack motivation, or lose patience more quickly, impacting everything from decision-making and impulsivity, to family relationships and operational readiness.

Crew Endurance, developed by Naval Postgraduate School with collaboration from Navy's **Operational Stress Control Program**, offers practical tips, research and operational tools for promoting adequate rest. To build your endurance:

- **Aim for seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep per night, preferably at the same time each day.** While uninterrupted sleep is ideal, compensating for any sleep deficit with a nap has proven benefits. A twenty-minute nap can help mitigate the effects of extended periods without rest on the mind and body, giving you a power boost. Avoid trying to plow through your day without adequate rest. Going 22 hours without sleep has the same effect on performance as being legally drunk!
- **Avoid large meals and vigorous exercise close to bedtime.** Consuming a nutritious and balanced diet is essential for fueling the mind and body, however, eating large meals before bedtime can lead to sleep disturbances. Aim to make your last meal of the day your smallest, and avoid alcohol in the last few hours before bedtime. Similarly, while exercising regularly can lead to stable energy throughout the day, avoid exercising within two to three hours before going to bed. For fitness and nutrition tips, check out **Navy Physical Readiness**.
- **Use caffeine strategically.** Coffee and other caffeinated beverages are best suited for the first part of your shift to promote alertness. However, caffeine, including soft drinks, should be avoided before bedtime. Instead, hydrate with nature's best: water.

Other tips for promoting optimal rest include blocking light and limiting noise in your sleep environment by using eye masks and ear plugs. It's also preferable to use bright light in the workspace to aid the body's natural circadian rhythm.

There are several ways to promote healthy sleep and work patterns at the command level as well, such as the Circadian-Based Watch Schedule, which has been tried by more than a dozen ships around the fleet. This schedule is built around a 24-hour day with stable sleep periods vice those built upon 15, 18 or 20 hour days. In combination with adjusting meal hours, allowing adequate time for physical training and holding most meetings mid-day, Circadian-Based Watch Schedules can promote crew alertness, optimize readiness and enhance command climate.

To learn more about sleep, test your fatigue level or find out how your command can implement a Circadian-based Watch Schedule, visit Crew Endurance at my.nps.edu/web/crewendurance/index.

